



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

May 1, 2018
Glassen Education Center
Rose Lake Shooting Range
14500 Peacock Road
Bath, Michigan

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

PRESENT

Tom Jones, Vice-Chair
Ken Buchholtz
Vendela Collins
Justin Lippe
Sarah Peurakoski (*via conference call*)
Will Purves
Bryan Wilkinson
Kimberly Woolridge

ABSENT

Scott Norris, Chair
Al Bobrofsky
Cindy Burkhour
Jonathon Edgerly
Michael Harris
Neal McKenzie

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

Sharon Schafer, AAC Executive Sponsor
Michael Holsinger, ADA Coordinator
Yolanda Taylor, Assistant to the AAC

PRESENT FROM THE DNR ACCESSIBILITY TEAM (A-TEAM)

Lynne Thoma, Fisheries
Jan Hebekeuser, Forest Resources
Christie Bayus and Tamara Jorkasky, Grants
Kimber Frantz and Rachel Coale, Great Lakes
Kirk Lapham, Legislative and Legal Affairs
Diana Engle, Michigan History Center
Julie Ellsworth and Dave Haupt, Marketing and Outreach
Mike Evanoff, Parks and Recreation
Vicki Brown, Wildlife

INTERPRETERS

Stacy Pierce and Janna Rowan

OTHERS PRESENT

Rebecca Powell, Department of Civil Rights
Krista Hubbard, DNR Wildlife

REGULAR MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS

Vice-Chair Tom Jones called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. with roll call and introductions around the room. He also announced the Chair, Scott Norris, was unable to attend.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice-Chair Jones asked the council if they had any additions, corrections or discussion regarding the February 27, 2018 Minutes. Sharon Schafer asked for the deletion of a sentence on page 5, but no other corrections, edits or discussion was offered.

Vice-Chair Jones requested a motion to approve the February 27, 2018 Minutes; Vendella Collins motioned to approve the Minutes; Kim Woolridge seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the February 2018 Minutes were approved.

PROJECT LEARNING TREE UPDATE

Ada Takacs, DNR Volunteer Coordinator, was unable to attend in person due to a red flag fire warning, but she did conference in and had provided the council with a written update. She has been working with deaf, blind and autistic communities, students and their educators through her Project Learning Tree program, which is a national forestry and environmental education program. She received a \$4,000 grant through the sustainable forestry initiative, and she also received a \$90,000 grant to train 1,200 educators over the next three years. She is also learning ASL and hopes to get to the point where she will no longer need an interpreter. Ada teams up with Maia Turek from the Parks and Recreation Division, and Natalie Elkins from the Marketing and Outreach Division.

Ada has already had a lot of successes as outlined in her report, but her most recent challenge is providing education on sounds. The people she has worked with want to know what sounds exist in the forest, so they are currently working on training tools that make that connection called "*Nature's Experience Through Touch*" to give them impressions on sounds. One example is, if you run your fingers across a comb, that same feeling is similar to the sound of a chorus frog.

In addition to the courses they are currently teaching, she will also be taking a group of twelve deaf students, two interpreters and 15 other people on the Suttons Bay school ship to learn about Great Lakes science. They are also talking about setting up tours at the fish hatcheries and are currently working on closed captioned videos. Mexico, Japan and Canada are her counterparts. They are picking up on their work and are interested in the courses they are creating. Michigan was the first state to put the training guide in electronic format. She is also working with Maia Turek from the Parks and Recreation Division in hopes of training park interpreters to be cognizant of people with disabilities and their needs.

One in 59 children are on the autism spectrum. They have been talking with Henry Ford and a lot of parents of autistic children to develop programs that are specifically designed for them. For example, just walking through the woods can be an overwhelming experience for an autistic child with all the different sounds and smells. They are looking at creating flip books that will show and explain what they'll see, staff they'll meet, the types of trees and animals they may see, and identify 'loud noise' areas, as well as quiet areas. Council member Kim Woolridge commented that this program could also be useful for people with PTSD or anxiety.

Ada's ultimate goal is to form a committee, but she has been busy with on the ground training. She is also looking for contacts to create maps and signage. Suggested contacts included

Marshall Strong in the Wildlife Division, Dave Forstat in the GIS Mapping Unit, Andy Evans for county maps, the parks and recreation division for park brochures, and she could also utilize the department's accessibility team if she wants to run ideas or materials by them for input or suggestions.

Sharon Schafer, AAC Sponsor, commented that she feels this is a good time for the department to promote this program and highlight its successes. Ada will work on getting a showcasing article published. She also suggested having Ada do a presentation to the department's resource bureau or management team.

After additional discussion about ideas and contacts that could help her further develop her programs and materials, Ada welcomed all ideas or suggested contacts by sending her an e-mail at takacs@michigan.gov.

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM & LIBRARY SERVICES (IMLS) GRANT APPLICATION

Diana Engle with the Michigan History Center (MHC) reported on a grant application. She had provided the council with a one-page summary for their review. The Michigan Braille and Talking Book Library (BTBL), which is located inside the Michigan Library and Historical Center (MLHC), is applying for a federal grant to adopt indoor positioning system technology and adapt the technology to assist blind or visually impaired staff and visitors. The technology will be used for wayfinding and to share information on the agencies within the building, events, and interpretive information in the museum and libraries. For people that are blind, it can be quite overwhelming to enter and navigate such a large facility. This application can be downloaded on all types of phones. People that use screen readers would be able to navigate the building and, eventually, the exhibits would also have beacons.

The funding source is a special initiative national leadership grant (\$25,000 to \$150,000) with a one-to-one match, including in-kind match. The IMLS, BTBL, DNR, MHC, Licensing and Regulatory Affairs and respective foundations are hoping to combine resources to cover the match. The goal would be to create and design a model for other state facilities (i.e. State Capitol, interpretive centers, the Outdoor Adventure Center, etc.). This is a two-year project.

The department's accessibility team endorsed this proposal and are in support of this grant. Diana is also seeking the endorsement and support of this council.

Sharon Schafer asked if a letter in support from the council would assist them in applying for and securing this grant. Diana accepted the offer for a letter of support from this body.

After entertaining numerous questions, comments and suggestions from council members and department staff, Vice Chair Jones asked for a motion to endorse and support this grant application and pilot project, and recommends the council prepare and submit a letter in support.

Vendela Collins made a motion in support of this grant application and pilot project, and the preparation of a letter in support from this council; Will Purves seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the council will prepare and submit a letter of support.

Sharon will work with Diana and the Chair to prepare a letter of support on behalf of the entire council by the May 10 grant application deadline. Notice of award will be announced in August with work commencing in October 2018.

Sharon also commented that the Department of Technology, Management and Budget may be interested in supporting or providing dollars from the technology fund to help with the match.

She will talk to them to see if they are willing to put dollars towards this technology and the match. Diana will provide Sharon with the estimated project cost.

Diana thanked the council for their support.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and State Park Endowment Fund

Sharon Schafer updated the council on the status of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and State Park Endowment Fund bills that are moving through the Legislature. They are Senate Joint Resolution O and House Bill 763. Currently, the oil and gas revenues go into the state park endowment fund. The department can spend fifty percent of those revenues on operations and capital improvements in state parks, and the other fifty percent goes towards building the corpus which is set at \$800 million. These bills propose to slow the growth of the corpus to twenty-five percent. The other twenty-five percent would go to local parks programs modeled after the trust fund program, and the Trust Fund Board would make decisions on where those dollars would be awarded. The bills also direct the interest and earnings from the trust fund to be spent on local and state development and acquisition projects, but no more than twenty-five percent can be used for development and no less than twenty-five percent can be used for acquisition. This proposal will change the development component to say **no less than** twenty-five percent. This gives the board the ability to flex a little bit if more development projects need to be funded. Once the endowment fund reaches \$800 million, those oil and gas revenues will go back into the trust fund. Basically, they are making sure oil and gas revenues get dedicated towards recreation into the future.

The bills are working their way through the Senate. It is the department's hope that the bills will be enacted in time for the August ballot.

Executive Updates

First, there are no organizational changes, but Sharon did welcome Rachel Coale and Kimber Frantz from the Office of the Great Lakes which recently merged with the department. She would like to invite the Office of the Great Lakes to talk about their projects and programs at an upcoming council meeting. They provide an important component, and access to the Great Lakes is a big part of their mission and the department's mission. They could also bring some of their projects to this group to offer up suggestions and ideas.

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board in April did something they have never done before. They went back and revisited the decisions they made in December 2017. They went back to the last application cycle and approved an additional \$10 million in projects, over and above the \$40 million in projects that was already approved. One of the larger projects they approved was Sargeant Sands. At the south end of Ludington State Park is a large mining operation. The department has been trying to acquire this property (appx. 337 acres) for the past 30+ years. It will become part of Ludington State Park if acquired, and the department is close to an agreement. The board also awarded approximately seven to eight additional trail projects that were not approved in the last round. It is the department's hope that the Legislature will act on these before their summer break so that the funds can be allocated for these projects.

At the last council meeting, a complaint was filed about Belle Isle Park. This complaint was forwarded to the Parks and Recreation Division to respond.

Accessibility Team Updates

Diana Engle, former A-Team Chair, turned over this portion of the meeting to the new chair, Christie Bayus. Diana's term as chair expired, effective today May 1, and Christie is now the new team chair. Christie is a program manager for the Grants Section of the department, and Tamara Jorkasky, also from the Grants Section is now the co-chair.

The members of the department's accessibility team thanked Diana for her leadership over the past year. Diana thanked everyone for their support.

Hunt from a Standing Vehicle Permit Update

Kirk Lapham from the department's Legislative and Legal Affairs office, reported there has been discussion in the past to change the language on this permit to meet statutory requirements. However, House Bill 5180, was introduced and, if passed, could affect some of the changes and requirements of this permit. The decision was made to hold off on making any changes to this permit pending the outcome of House Bill 5180.

2018 Recreation Grants

Tamara Jorkasky reported there will be three grant applications/projects that will go through the review process this year. They include the:

- Saginaw Bay Visitor Center Renovations, from the Marketing and Outreach Division;
- Pigeon River Country Discovery Center Renovations, from the Michigan History Center; and
- Belle Isle Picnic Shelter Replacements, from the Parks and Recreation Division.

Tamara will be sending out materials and setting up meetings with the department's internal subcommittee, followed by a meeting with the council's subcommittee for review and input. The three grant applications will be presented to the council at their August 2018 meeting for endorsement.

Vice Chair Jones asked when the wildlife habitat grants are due; staff responded that the application period opens June 1 and closes July 23, 2018.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Vacancies/Process

Vice Chair Jones reiterated that, currently, there are three vacancies on the council. He charged council members with identifying individuals or organizations that they believe would be a good fit, and to reach out to determine their interest in serving or appointing someone to serve on the council. They should send their recommendations to Chair Norris, Vice Chair Jones, Sharon Schafer and Yolanda Taylor. If they identify someone that expresses an interest in serving on the council, have them contact Yolanda Taylor and she will send them an application.

Sharon Schafer reminded them that we want to make sure we have well-rounded representation on the council, and to make sure we have all interest groups at the table. We do not want to have members that represent the same interests or organizations. Members can review the roster on-line or ask Yolanda to send it to them to see what groups or organizations are already represented.

Jones commented that we have a great group of people already at the table that have a lot of connections. Also, there are a lot of projects taking place (i.e. Project Learning Tree, MiOFO, Wheelin' Sportsmen) and a lot of opportunities to advance accessible recreation in this state.

Hopefully we can identify people or organizations that would be willing to come to the table to assist in these efforts.

Yolanda mentioned a lady/organization that contacted her, expressing an interest in serving on the council or at least attending a meeting. Jeanna Post is with JLP Association Management and they organize the "Pursuing a Dream Foundation." They are a unique organization out of West Michigan that empower children, teens and adults with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors in a setting that breaks down barriers. Also, the support of their donors gives them the ability to fund special projects that increase awareness and make recreational facilities more accessible to everyone in their community. Yolanda will follow up with Jeanna to determine if they have decided about serving on the council or at least attend a future meeting. They are working on launching a new website, but you can view the current site at www.pursuingadream.org. Also, based on Ada's presentation, a group that represents autistic children or adults with PTSD would also be an excellent fit.

August Meeting in Traverse City

Vice Chair Jones asked Yolanda for an update on the August meeting in Traverse City. Yolanda reported she had to get bids from various hotels in the area and is currently working with Cambria Suites on an agreement for lodging as they came in with the best bid. The hotel rates in the Traverse City area during the summer are extremely high, and some hotels are not deserving of the rates they are asking. Once the agreement is in place, a hold will be placed on the rooms for all council and accessibility team members that have indicated they need lodging for this meeting, including three accessible rooms. She mentioned it is imperative that everyone commit to lodging because, after the deadline, we are obligated to pay for those rooms even if somebody is a no show or cancels.

August 20 will be travel day and she is looking into tours of possibly the Platte River Fish Hatchery, the Grand Traverse Shooting Range, Traverse City State Park or something that is closer than the Sleeping Bear Dunes. August 21 is the day of the meeting and it will be held at the department's newest Traverse City Customer Service Center. The hotel does not have a large enough room to accommodate this meeting. The meeting should adjourn around noon so people can begin their return travel. If anybody is familiar with or interested in touring or seeing sites in the community, send your comments or ideas to Yolanda.

Vice Chair Jones and Sharon Schafer reiterated that, while we want to make sure the council has opportunities to visit and enjoy state-owned or managed sites/facilities, it is important to commit to the tours, lodging and attendance because of the extensive behind-the-scenes work that goes into planning, arranging and coordinating meetings that are held outside of the Lansing area.

Council Updates

Vice Chair Jones reported he has currently received five applications for the David Pollie Classic essay contest. This year, the contest was open to children, ages 5 to 18, instead of adults. His organization, MiOFO, intend to donate a youth model tracked chair to the winning child that has a medical need for this type of device. The contest ends June 1. Jones will announce the winner at the next council meeting.

Council member Ken Buchholtz reported that his organization, the Wheelin' Sportsmen, recently received funding from the U.P. Whitetails organization and are in the process of building a hunting blind specifically designed for tracked chairs. There is a height difference between wheelchairs and tracked chairs, so they are putting the windows and heating units a little higher and making the door wider to accommodate the tracked chair.

Chair Jones commented they are also picking up another preserve in the Pinckney area. The UAW Ramp Team has already constructed three blinds for the Pierce Road unit, and they intend to add two more blinds to that hunting unit. Tom is interested in partnering up with Ken's builders to talk about building the 'perfect' blind that will accommodate all users, and they are interested in building trailer blinds for the preserve.

Vice Chair Jones further reported that the donated trike bike is ready, it's in storage and he is ready to work with Justin Lippe with mParks or the Parks and Recreation Division to determine the best location to place it for rentals.

Kim Woolridge recommended Belle Isle Park in Detroit, or the Outdoor Adventure Center that sits right by the Detroit Riverfront and Dequindre Cut trail.

Kirk Lapham mentioned the e-bike legislation and recommended reaching out to the Parks and Recreation Division to determine what effect, if any, this legislation could have on state-owned trails. Kirk explained e-bikes are basically a hybrid between bicycles and mopeds. The legislation defines them into three classes to determine where they can or cannot be used. Mike Evanoff will follow up with their legislative person and connect with Tom after the meeting.

Council member Ken Buchholtz shared information about the 59th Annual NTA (National Trappers Association) Convention that is being held July 26-28, 2018 on the fairgrounds in Escanaba; it's a sportsmen's fair. He also shared information about the annual "*Re-Creating in the Outdoors*" event that is being held on August 4, 2018, for people with disabilities. Council member Sarah Peurakoski's organization, SAIL (Superior Alliance for Outdoor Living), partners up and provides the kayaks, while others provide hand peddle bikes, sailboats and pontoon boats. They take people with disabilities out boating and sailing, and they also go to the Pocket Park to do some fishing, pellet gun and archery shooting, and end the day with a big dinner. When they first started this eight years ago, they barely had two nickels to rub together, but they're motto has always been "*where there's a wheel there's a way.*"

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

CLOSING BUSINESS

Vice Chair Jones also made a plea to all department employees. In your everyday jobs, especially during the summer when you are doing surveys, deer checks, etc., remember there are people that would enjoy tagging along to learn about the department while volunteering their time. For example, Tom just arranged for an active duty military couple that love fishing and are about to be deployed to go on a Cass Lake survey at the end of May with the Fisheries Division. Other examples would include, going out on a research vessel, fish stocking or salmon egg taking, pulling invasive species, deer check stations, and other activities where the department could use the help while providing an educational outdoor experience to the public, veterans and people with disabilities.

Yolanda mentioned some bills that were recently introduced (House Bills 5876 and 5877) to modify the symbol of accessibility for the State of Michigan, and parking spaces. It appears they are looking to change the standard symbol to a symbol that represents mobility. Council member Vendella Collins responded that their office is looking at those bills. The intent is to basically update the symbol to not show a person that uses a wheelchair in a stationary position, but more towards a person that is on the go and enjoying community. Some other states are looking at changing the symbol as well, and they are anticipating that this will become the more universal symbol into the future.

House Bill 5834 proposes to amend the Michigan vehicle code to create an exemption from the requirement to obtain a driver's license for a disabled person that is operating a disability mobility vehicle. Vendella responded that their office is also looking at that bill and would be happy to report back on these bills at a future meeting.

ADJOURN

Vice-Chair Jones asked if there were any further comments. No additional comments were offered. He then asked for a motion to adjourn.

Vendella Collins motioned for adjournment; Ken Buchholtz seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.